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1. New York Times, Thursday 3 March 1983 (story from page attached).

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—NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 1983—

## WHITE HOUSE URGES SALVADOR TO CALL ELECTION THIS YEAR

### ADVANCE FROM '84 SOUGHT

#### Pope's Visit Seen as a Likely Time for Announcement — Publicity Called Threat

By **BERNARD GWERTZMAN**  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 2 — The Reagan Administration has urged the Salvadoran Government to advance the date of presidential elections from next March to later this year, State Department officials said today.

They said the Administration had sought an announcement for next Sunday to coincide with the visit of Pope John Paul II to El Salvador. The Pope arrived in Costa Rica today at the start of his weeklong tour of Central America.

The officials added, however, that because the election plan had been made public by a special American envoy, Richard Stone, it was uncertain the Government of President Alvaro Magaña would go ahead with it.

#### Envoy Visits San Salvador

The Reagan Administration had hoped to keep the planning secret so the announcement would be seen as a Salvadoran initiative. The purpose in moving up the election date, officials said, was to dramatize the Salvadoran leaders' commitment to democratic rule and national reconciliation. The plan was also supposed to help the Reagan Administration to persuade Congress to approve \$80 million in additional aid for the Salvadoran Army.

Mr. Stone, a former Democratic Senator from Florida, was recently named a special ambassador for "public diplomacy" in Latin America. Without advance publicity, he flew to San Salvador with two members of the White House National Security Council last week, officials said, to urge members of the Salvadoran Government and other leading politicians to take highly publicized steps to offset their reputation in the United States, particularly in Congress.

The first word of Mr. Stone's activities was disclosed by WTSP-TV of Tampa, Fla., which reported Tuesday night that Mr. Stone, on a commercial flight from San Salvador to Miami, had told a reporter for the station that negotiations on moving up the elections had reached "a very advanced stage."

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## SALVADORANS DENY FACING ARMS CRISIS

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of the national police, voiced similar views, as did two other officials who declined to be quoted by name.

"No, I don't believe it is critical," Colonel López said of the military situation. "We have had some favorable progress in the last week, so I don't think it is critical at all."

He referred to a military sweep conducted for the last two weeks near the Guazapa volcano, 20 miles north of the capital, where some guerrilla camps were found, some guns and ammunition captured and some guerrillas killed. Another recent development was the end of guerrilla attempts to take the town of Suchitoto, in the volcano region. Salvadoran officials said Government soldiers drove the guerrillas away about a week ago. [The guerrillas' Venceremos Radio said, according to Reuters, that insurgents operating in the northeastern province of Morazan had occupied the village of Las Delicias, eight miles from the provincial capital. The report was not confirmed by the Government.]

Military officials here suggested that the Reagan Administration viewed the Salvadoran situation as being in a "crisis" stage out of fear of what might happen in the region if the guerrillas were to win.

#### "Political Threat" Noted

"The United States understands that a Marxist country here would be a political threat to them in the short, medium and long term," Colonel Flores said. "And they should understand well that another country in the hands of Marxists would be a real threat within their strategic schemes."

The military forces here suffered a considerable psychological blow during the last guerrilla offensive in which the rebels were able to capture the southeastern city of Berlin, in the rich agricultural province of Usulután, and to hold it for a few days. The guerrillas withdrew shortly before Government forces arrived.



The New York Times/Marcinabel V. de Schenck  
Col. Rafael Flores Lima

Salvadoran military officials said that the armed forces were planning an offensive of their own so as to retake the initiative. They said additional military assistance was a necessary component of this plan, and some said the army could use more military advisers to train soldiers.

"It's obvious that we need more military aid," Colonel López said. "And it's possible that we need more advisers, because you must remember, we don't have enough officers, especially for training."

#### Some American Advice Resisted

Lieut. Col. Miguel Méndez, the commander of the United States-trained Ramón Bellosé Battalion, said earlier this month that some of the commanders could use more assistance from advisers, but that much of their resistance to incorporating the advice of the American trainers came from not having adequate equipment.

José Napoleón Duarte, a former President of El Salvador, said he thought the country could do without more United States advisers. He said, however, that the military needed four additional battalions, or 5,000 more men, if it was to break the present stalemate.

The Salvadoran armed forces have a total of about 22,400 men. Included in this number are three United States-trained battalions of 3,000 men and what are known as two small battalions of nearly 800 men trained by Venezuelans. A third small battalion is being trained, and more are planned. Also confronting the guerrillas are three security forces totaling 10,000 men. The guerrillas, who have managed to increase their ability to operate throughout the country, are believed to number 8,000 to 7,500 men.

#### Popular Support Held Vital

Mr. Duarte said there was a need to improve the command structure of the Salvadoran forces. Once that is done and more training is approved, he said, "the army will have to incorporate in its strategy the understanding that this is a political war."

Colonel López agreed that popular support was a critical component in winning the war, and said the armed forces had to maintain the support that existed.

United States advisers are concerned that the Salvadoran armed forces may be unable to take the initiative during the current lull. Some said they believed that a power vacuum existed here, with no one political or military figure in charge of the war.

While some Salvadoran military officials agreed that changes had to be made in the command structure, they bristled at the suggestion by some advisers that their commanders were incompetent.

#### Lost Opportunity Conceded

But even Salvadoran officials acknowledged that they had missed an opportunity to take the initiative in the war when, after the elections of last March, the momentum was on their side. But, they asserted, there is more for the army to consider than just winning the war.

They said the country's democracy got off to a shaky start after the elections. They also said the Government needed the armed forces to prevent a coup from the far right — two rightist parties had won a majority in the assembly — and to assure the future of the country's land redistribution program against efforts to suspend it. With 4,500 peasants evicted from land they had

been in the process of acquiring, the military intervened and helped move them back.

During this period, officials noted, the five guerrilla commanders were able to regroup, with the result that they are now coordinating their attacks. The time between offensives has become shorter.